

“Town Hall” meeting generates ideas to improve Medicaid maternity care

A series of open discussions aimed at improving infant mortality rates and the Medicaid Maternity Care program in Alabama began December 8 in Tuscaloosa as a large group of physicians, nurses, care coordinators, hospital employees, program managers, state agency representatives and others gathered during the first of five “Town Hall” meetings.

Alabama Medicaid Commissioner Carol Steckel told attendees that the Agency’s “major players” were on hand to listen to their ideas regarding improvements for a redesigned Maternity Care program. She challenged participants to not only help generate ideas and suggestions to improve the Agency’s Maternity Care program, but also provide statistical and cost information the Agency needs to stay within its budget.

“Help us, not only with a list of suggestions, but also how to quantify and justify them, to make it through the budget process so that we can accomplish what everyone wants to accomplish—healthier babies, healthier moms, and a Medicaid program that is viable,” urged Commissioner Steckel.



Daniel Avery, M.D., a Tuscaloosa obstetrician, listens as Commissioner Carol Steckel discusses redesign ideas during the first Medicaid Maternity town hall meeting.

Among the suggestions offered were home care prenatal monitoring, an improved electronic tracking system for high-risk patients, and linking with the Department of Education to disseminate information to teenagers in school systems across the state.

“If we can make a difference in this program, we will make a difference in infant mortality in Alabama,” said Medicaid Medical Director Robert Moon, M.D., who moderated the discussion. “That is our objective.”

A recent report by the Alabama Department of Public Health indicated the state’s infant mortality rate increased to 10.0 deaths per 1,000 births in 2007, compared to 9.0 deaths per 1,000 births in 2006.

Four additional town hall meetings will be held in January: Birmingham (January 13), Spanish Fort (January 15), Montgomery (January 22), and Huntsville (January 29). A free web conference will be held in conjunction with the Montgomery meeting. [Click here](#) for details on how to participate in an upcoming session.